

RECOGNIZING THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA FOOTBALL TEAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MURPHY) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the football team at the University of Central Florida located in my congressional district.

The Knights finished the season ranked sixth in the Nation by the Associated Press. They had a perfect 13-0 record—the only team in college football to go undefeated. UCF won the American Athletic Conference championship with an exhilarating—and excruciating—double-overtime victory against a talented team from the University of Memphis.

The Knights shook up the world of college football in the Peach Bowl on New Year's Day when they beat Auburn University, one of the most storied football programs in the country.

I had a personal stake in the outcome of the Peach Bowl, having made a friendly bet on the game with Congressman MIKE ROGERS, whose Alabama district is home to Auburn. I am excited to collect my winnings from Congressman ROGERS later today, a bucket of delicious Florida oranges that he will deliver to me while carrying a UCF helmet.

I thank the football gods that UCF did not lose. Under the terms of the wager, I would have been compelled to blanket a tree on the Capitol grounds with toilet paper, pursuant to a time-honored and, frankly, bewildering Auburn tradition. I am grateful that the Knights saved Capitol Police from the trouble of having to arrest a Member of Congress for vandalism.

Even though UCF was not given the opportunity to play for the national championship, the players and coaches of this team are national champions in my book. The Knights didn't just win games, they also won our hearts. They didn't just beat opponents, they also beat the odds. Sports—in particular, team sports—have a unique power to captivate, to unify, and to inspire.

Under the strong and steady leadership of Head Coach Scott Frost, the Knights captivated the school's students and alumni, filling them with pride. They united our Central Florida University community from Orlando to Oviedo, from Apopka to Altamonte Springs, and they inspired countless people, young and old alike, both football experts and novices. Importantly, UCF the football team brought national attention to UCF the university, which has quietly become one of Florida's and our Nation's academic gems.

To be sure, the Knights' squad was filled with talented players, seven of whom won first team all-conference honors, including rifle-armed quarterback McKenzie Milton, fleet-footed running back Adrian Killins, and one-handed defensive warrior Shaquem Griffin, who personifies courage and character.

Many members of the team justifiably played with a chip on their shoulder, having been overlooked by more established college football programs coming out of high school. They had to earn respect through their actions. Ultimately, what made the Knights so special and so successful was not what they accomplished as individuals, but, rather, what they achieved together as a team.

It was clear from watching the coaches and players that they loved and respected each other. The bond they shared made them teammates in the truest sense of the word. The team's motto, which is the name of the UCF fight song, is "Charge on." It is a message whose power extends beyond the football field and applies to life itself. When you confront challenges, charge on. When others doubt your abilities, charge on. And when you think you can't work any harder, charge on.

As a proud fan, I thank the UCF football team for showing us all what it means to charge on.

CONGRATULATIONS TO NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. EMMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize seven students from my district who have received the 2017 National Merit Scholarships.

The criteria required to receive a National Merit Scholarship is quite difficult. In fact, of the 15,000 finalists selected, only half will actually receive scholarships. The recipients of this prestigious scholarship are Connor Schmidt of Ham Lake, Benjamin Caswell of Shoreview, Raffi Toghrumadjan of Blaine, Rachel Cho of Blaine, Piper Christenson of Spring Lake Park, Catherine Lewis of Blaine, and Kenneth Truong of Coon Rapids. Each one of these students has big plans for the future which include careers in medicine, science, and engineering—all fields that are critically important to the success of our Nation.

I congratulate each of these students on receiving this scholarship, and we look forward to watching you achieve great success in your respective careers.

Good work, and good luck.

REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF CAPTAIN JEFFREY VOLLMER

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the life of one of Minnesota's heroes. On Tuesday, December 19, 2017, Captain Jeffrey Vollmer of the Mayer Fire Department died in the line of duty.

A loving father and husband, Jeff is survived by his wife, Emily, and their two daughters, Anika and Kennedy. He was a 12-year veteran of the all-volunteer fire department in Mayer, Minnesota. Friends and colleagues knew him as a selfless and kind leader who was always willing to help others.

Fire Chief Rod Maetzold described Jeff as the kind of guy you could count on when it mattered most. Jeff was an avid muskie fisherman who enjoyed hunting and photography. Jeff loved to work with wood. He built signs, tables, and even a bed set for his daughter.

We pray for peace and comfort for his colleagues, friends, and family. He will be missed by so many.

RECOGNIZING JAKE HENRIKSEN

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding servicemember from my district, Jake Henriksen. As a Centennial graduate and resident of Lino Lakes, Minnesota, Jake always knew he wanted to serve in the military. As a third-generation member of the U.S. Army, his service as a specialist representing the 173rd Airborne Infantry Brigade Combat Team continues a family legacy of service to our Nation.

In just under 2 years in the service, Jake won the U.S. Army Europe Soldier of the Year award. Each company of the Army made up of about 100 people selects a soldier to compete in the Best Warrior Competition. Jake was chosen as his company's representative. The competition tests soldiers' abilities in a variety of areas, including a physical test, a written test, marksmanship, land navigation, chemical defense, and medical tasks. Jake excelled in all, which is why he went on to earn the title of U.S. Army Europe Soldier of the Year affirming his commitment to excellence.

Our community is very proud of Jake and his accomplishments. We admire his dedication and his commitment to serve. Congratulations, Jake.

COMMEMORATING NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT APPRECIATION DAY

Mr. EMMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day to remember the men and women in blue who protect and serve our great Nation. The great State of Minnesota is home to many phenomenal law enforcement officers, men and women, who put their lives on the line each and every day to ensure the safety and security of our communities.

These are the true heroes, and some, tragically, have lost their lives in the line of duty. In 2016, Deputy Steven Sandberg was shot and killed in the line of duty in St. Cloud, Minnesota. While his death was both senseless and tragic, we remember the courageous way he chose to live and serve our local community.

In honor of brave officers like Deputy Sandberg today and every day, let us remember and honor the selfless service of our men and women in blue.

DEFENDING THE AMERICA WORD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, this morning, a high school senior sat attentively in a Chicago classroom while